

Big Bell companies are blocking access to their networks and stopping competition before it can even begin for local, long-distance, the Internet, cell phone services, and new technologies like making calls over the Internet. If these mergers go through, only two companies will control 90 percent of the consumer market. As a customer of Verizon, I know all too well what this means. The service I receive from this company is horrendous (having been a recent Qwest customer, I do have a point of comparison). Mergers such as those you are now considering will exacerbate the problems regularly experienced by people like me-people who don't have a choice of service providers and must pay ridiculous fees for scandalously poor service. These mergers would put the interests of large corporations over the interests of individual consumers, and you have a duty to block them. In a world of increased competition, consumers could be enjoying unlimited local and long-distance telephone calls, as well as high-speed Internet access, for just \$40 -- \$15 for community Internet and \$25 for unlimited phone calls over the Internet. But today, this costs about \$90 more than double the price! The FCC should block these mergers and find new ways to bring down the costs of these services, particularly high-speed Internet which has become essential to modern life and is the gateway to exciting new technologies, like making phone calls on the Internet and streaming in video over the Internet. America is falling behind the rest of the world in broadband deployment. We are now 16th, far behind countries like Japan and Korea, which have opened up the building blocks of broadband phone and cable lines to competitors. This merger would only worsen these problems and therefore must be blocked. They would stifle competition, raise prices, and lead to fewer choices, making the problem worse, not better.